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ABSTRACT

This is a transcript of a weekly radio "magazine" program devoted to coverage of the field of education. The theme is the American teacher. Discussion includes: (1) a typical day in a first-grade class; (2) a high school English class; (3) student grading; (4) music class; (5) the school lunch program; (6) a retired teacher talks of her future; (7) discussion of a poem about teachers; and (8) the characteristics of a good teacher. (MM)

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PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER

PART 2

PROGRAM #63

JANUARY 31, 1977

National Public Radio

Options in Education

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PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER

PART 2

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

BLAIR: And I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: It's morning -- and another day in the lives of Mrs. Kathryn Peterson and Mrs. Irene Castle.

BLAIR: Kathryn Peterson teaches first grade at the Hindley School in Darien, Connecticut. She's been teaching here for 36 years.

MERROW: As a matter of fact, 28 years ago I was in her first grade.

BLAIR: Irene Castle teaches English at the L.G. Pinkston High School in Dallas, Texas. She is a 13 year veteran of the teaching profession.

MERROW: We are going to follow Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Castle through their day in school. We'll talk with them about what they do, and I hope we'll stir up some memories that you have tucked away in one or two corners of your mind.

BLAIR: Lloyd Gite of Station KERA, in Dallas, spent the day with Mrs. Castle.

MERROW: I had the fun of going back to first grade.

BLAIR: So, let's go back to first grade and to high school.

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

PETERSON: "Jeremy ... oh dear! We have a little problem. 2-4-6-8-10 -- and you make 11 in this tape. 2-4-6-8-10 -- we were 10 and 10; now we're going to be 11 and 10. How many children is that, Jay? 11 and 10? C'mon, Jay! Oh ... I know you know, Gordon ..."

CHILD: "I know ... I know!"

PETERSON: "Okay, Gordon -- tell us."

CHILD: "21!"

PETERSON: "21 -- right. By the way, would you put your lunchboxes up where they belong, folks? Thank you. Now ... we have a new girl this morning, folks. You know who she is?"

CHILD: "No!"

PETERSON: "Tell him your name."

CHILD: "Vera Ellen."

PETERSON: "Vera Ellen ... can you all say it?"

ALL: "Vera Ellen."

PETERSON: "And your last name is?"

CHILD: "Fry."

PETERSON: "So, let's say it together ..."

ALL: "Vera Ellen Fry ..."

PETERSON: "Very nice. Now, the first thing we do in the morning, Vera, is ... usually the bell rings ..."

GITE: It's 8:30 Tuesday morning. Classes have just started at L.G. Pinkston High School in Dallas.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

CASTLE: "Lyle Nicholson ..."

STUDENT: "Here."

CASTLE: "Leonard Jiles ..."

STUDENT: "Present."

CASTLE: "Anthony Reed ..."

STUDENT: "Here."

CASTLE: "Kerchill Garrett ... Gwendolyn Johnson ... Rebecca Hall ..."

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

PETERSON: "When the bell rings, everybody stands up, and we salute the flag, and then we have what we call 'meditation' -- and we all bow our heads, and we sort of say a little prayer inside of ourselves, okay? And then, when the bell rings again, then we sing our songs. Okay? Everybody ready?"

CHILDREN: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands -- one nation, Under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

CHILDREN SINGING:

"My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty --
Of thee I sing ...
Land where my fathers died ... land of the Pilgrim's pride,
From every mountainside, let freedom ring."

PETERSON: "Im going to ask you to take the things out of your desk, and fix it the way we always fix it. Please do that ... yes. You're a wonderful girl! What are they?"

CHILD: "They're ... they're to bring down to the office."

PETERSON: "Tell us what they are -- I know what they are, but tell us."

CHILD: "So Mrs. Wood can get some more things for the school."

PETERSON: "And what are they?"

CHILD: "And they're soup ... Campbells ..."

PETERSON: "Right ..."

BOTH: "Labels ..."

PETERSON: "That's right ... take them down to Mrs. Wood. Thank you, dear."

PETERSON: We're saving labels for ... to get equipment.

MERROW: What happens if you collect them?

PETERSON: You get playground equipment. If you have 16,000 or something like that.

CHILDREN: "J-A-N-U-A-R-Y"

PETERSON: "You know January ... what date ... what number, Kathy?"

CHILD: "Third ..."

PETERSON: "Right. He's just been to Florida."

CHILD: "He has?"

PETERSON: "Um ... he went down a week before the vacation started, because his daddy and mommy had a reunion down there. Ooh ... good thing I'm strong ... how about that?"

MERROW: "What's in the paper bag? Yes ... look at that!"

PETERSON: "C'mon sweetie ... fix your desk, fix your desk. Oh, my word! That's a heavy one!"

CHILD: "What's that?"

CHILD: "This one's really light ..."

PETERSON: "Jeff's gonna tell you. Now, Jeff, you ... Jeff, tell the children what they are."

CHILD: "Coconuts!"

PETERSON: "Where did you get them? Can you tell the children that?"

CHILD: "On the golf course."

PETERSON: "On the gold course! Imagine having one of those come down and hit you on the head when you're shootin' ..."

CHILD: "That's what my father was just talking about."

PETERSON: "Is that what your daddy said? Can you put them over on the table for me, dear? Thank you, honey. Now, boys and girls, we're gonna have to check hot lunches -- so would you get in your seats, please? Now, would you spell "Lunch" for me, Mr. Matthew?"

CHILD: "L-U ..."

PETERSON: "Right ..."

CHILD: "N ..."

PETERSON: "Right ..."

CHILD: "C ..."

PETERSON: "Right ..."

CHILD: "H."

PETERSON: "That's the way I want it. Row one -- anybody that's going to eat a hot lunch today. Jeremy, what's for hot lunch today?"

CHILD: "I don't know."

PETERSON: "You're gonna eat it anyhow, huh? Anybody know what's for hot lunch today?"

MERROW: "Hot dogs."

PETERSON: "Hot dogs? Ooh! I'm glad you're here! Hot dogs. Okay. How many for your row, Jeremy?"

CHILD: "One."

PETERSON: "Thank you. Row two -- anybody for hot lunch today? Darren -- can you tell me how many for your row, dear?"

CHILD: "One."

PETERSON: "Right. One plus one, Mr. Darren?"

CHILD: "Two."

PETERSON: "Thank you. Now, I have 2 hot lunches. Row 3 -- anybody for hot lunch? Vera ... you're gonna stand up with Row 4, so don't stand up yet -- okay, sweetie? How many, Gordon?"

CHILD: "Three."

PETERSON: "Thank you. Two lunches and three more lunches make how many lunches?"

CHILD: "Five."

PETERSON: "Thank you. Now I have 5 hot lunches. Row 4 -- now Vera, do you want to stand up with them? Thank you. How many, Mr. Greg?"

CHILD: "Two."

PETERSON: "Right. Five lunches and 2 more lunches, Greg, make ..."

CHILD: "Seven!"

PETERSON: "Right. So I have 7 hot lunches. Would you spell 'milk' for me, please, Tod? What kind of an eye is that, honey?"

GITE: What's the average day like for a teacher? Well, today, we'll find out. We better hurry and get to class, or else we'll miss the first period discussion on biographies.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

CASTLE: "And what is meant by the term 'biography'? When we studies words, what did we learn about 'bio' -- what did we say 'bio' ..."

STUDENTS: "For the study of."

CASTLE: "'Bio' is the study of. Is 'bio' the study of?"

STUDENT: "I thought 'bio' was life."

CASTLE: "'Bio' is life! I agree. You thought properly. 'Bio' is life. And what is 'graph' -- James? The definition you gave for life is the definition for 'graph', James. What did you say?"

STUDENT: "It's the study of."

CASTLE: "The study of ... okay. Biography is the life of another person. Written by whom? Written by whom?"

STUDENT: "Someone else ..."

CASTLE: "By ... by ..."

STUDENT: "By the person ... somebody else ..."

CASTLE: "By the person ..."

GITE: First period seems to be one of the toughest periods of the day. Several students who arrived late for school often interrupted the activities of the class. Another interruption was the morning announcements.

> "The Pinkston Bikan Scene newspaper has ... went out of the way to bring you the news at the low price of only 15¢ an issue. This way, all loyal bikans can receive an issue of their very own. They will be sold 4th period Thursday, and the Bikan Scene is asking all bikans to support this newspaper by buying an issue. Thank you -- and that ends our morning announcements. Oh, we have one other now. At 4 o'clock this afternoon, the varsity basketball team will be playing Woodrow Wilson in the girl's gym. Now, the price of admission is 50¢."

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

PETERSON: "Now, I have a paper with no name, so I'm just gonna put it over here."

CHILD: "I think it's Jeremy's!"

PETERSON: "We're not gonna talk about it ... okay? Jeremy? I think there's some things that you need to work on. Would you come and look at your paper with me, sweetie? Wherever I made the red, there's where you had your problems. I'm going to ask you to take a piece of paper home today, and copy it over for me. Can you do that, dear? Thank you. I think the next one belongs to Mr. Gordon. Mr. Gordon, would you come and get your paper, please? I think you'll see your mistakes when you look at the red marks, okay? Stephanie, you had a star. After you look at it, would you put it on the table? Steve -- you had a star. Now, Tod, I'm going to ask you to come and read this for me. Come quickly ... come quickly, Tod, I'm waiting for you.

Settle down, Gordon. Settle down, sweetie. Can you read what this says?"

CHILD: "See me."

PETERSON: "Now, do you know why I'm asking you to see me? Why am I asking you to see me?"

CHILD: "I did almost all of them wrong."

PETERSON: "You did a lot of things wrong, yes. Now, I'm going to ask you to take paper home tonight, and copy this over for me for homework. It's the same old thing. Emily, it was almost a star. I think you're going to be upset with yourself when you see where your mistake was -- because it's beautiful writing, honey. Alex, you had a star. Tessa, you had a star. The next one belongs to Miss Kim. Miss Kim, you must have had a bad day. Check your paper, and you'll see what I mean.

"I have another one with no name ... these people with no names. Poor children! Darren, you had one little mistake -- almost a star, honey. And, Isabel -- you had 2 little mistakes. Now, if you didn't get your paper back, would you come now, and let me see if it's yours? I have 2 papers. Would you put your name on it?"

CHILD: "This is mine."

PETERSON: "Put your name on it, please. Now, you ready? If you did not get a star, fold it -- put it in your blue book, please. Get it ready to take home. Matthew, you had a star on one side and a star on the other side, so you can stand up, like a big fella.

"Tessa, you may stand up. Gordon, you may stand up. Stephanie, you may stand up. Emily, you may stand up. Greg, you may stand up. Melissa -- you had a lot of problems. I'm going to ask you to take it home and do it over for me, would you do that for homework tonight? Thank you. Steve, you had one mistake. Come and get your paper please. Kathy? You may stand up.

"Let's count the people who had them all right on both sides. Stand up nice and tall. You ready? Let's start with Kathy. 1,2,3 -- count with me -- 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. That was good, wasn't it?"

CHILD: "Ten twenties!"

PETERSON: "Ten out of ..."

CHILD: "Mrs. Peterson ..."

PETERSON: "No, we didn't have 20 -- we only had 19, because Jeff was absent, remember?"

CHILD: "Oh, yeah ..."

CHILD: "Mrs. Peterson -- I didn't get mine!"

PETERSON: "Did you give me one? May I see your math book? Do you know why you didn't get it back?"

CHILD: "Because I didn't do it."

PETERSON: "You said it! Say it again, good and loud."

CHILD: "I didn't do it."

PETERSON: "Why didn't you do it?"

CHILD: "Ummm. I don't know."

PETERSON: "You don't know? Maybe you better work a little faster today, huh? Okay. The question is solved!"

GITE: It's now 9:46, and the second period class is discussing synonyms and word definitions.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

CASTLE: "Okay ... people under pressure. What is meant by the word 'pressure'? I'll tell you a definition a student gave me that I thought was very good. What was it ... hard times? Why does everyone say hard times for pressure?

"Strain! Okay ... under strain. And what did you say, Reginald?"

STUDENT: "Depression."

CASTLE: "Depression? Depression. I don't know about that. Depression. Depression. That's hard times, too, isn't it? Okay. But you know invariably, I always get that answer -- hard times. Are we having hard times now? Things pretty good for most of us?"

STUDENTS: "No."

CASTLE: "No? Things bad or are things good?"

STUDENT: "Sometimes."

CASTLE: "Sometimes sporadic ... good and bad, okay. All right. And the people under pressure. Well, we'll learn about people under pressure. Someone said strain -- someone says force. Is there anyone here under pressure right now?"

GITE: Mrs. Castle constantly stresses the need for her students to read in class, as well as out of class. Third period is underway -- and student reading takes up the bulk of the class period.

CASTLE: "Read, and when you would like to stop, and let someone else. I'll stop all of you about a minute before bell time. Okay? Turn over in your mind everything that has transpired in class today. All right? Volunteers."

STUDENT: "Stopover in Kataro. Two years ago, my family and I were driving to Mexico on the Juarez Highway. We had a blowout, and the car turned over. My wife, who was driving, and my daughter were instantly killed. One of my twin sons, Andy, suffered a severe concussion, and had to be hospitalized in a town called Kataro, about 90 kilometers from Mexico City."

MERROW: Now we're in music class.

TEACHER: "Let's sing our good-morning song, okay? Okay. We'll sing our name. Ready? Sing!"

ALL: "Good morning ... good morning to you,
Clap your hands ... how do you do?
Good morning ... good morning to you.
Stamp your feet. How do you do?
Good morning ... good morning to you.
Snap your fingers ... how do you do?"

TEACHER: "Thank you! Let's sit down, now. I understand we have a new girl with us in our class."

CHILD: "Right over there!"

TEACHER: "Vera. Okay. How about if we teach her our name song? We go around in a circle, and every person in the circle gets a chance to sing their name in a song. Which one should we do? I think we know a few of them, don't we?"

CHILD: "Uh ... 'No One in The House!'"

TEACHER: "'No One in The House' Okay. Stephanie, would you like to lead that one? No one in the house but Stephanie! Ready?"

CHILD: "No one in the house but Stephanie, Stephanie, no one in the house but me, I know. No one in the house but Stephanie, Stephanie, playing on the old banjo!"

ALL: "No one in the house but ..."

CHILD: "Gordon, Gordon ... no one in the house but me, I know. No one in the house but Gordon, Gordon, playing on the old banjo."

ALL: "No one in the house but Jeff, Jeff ..."

CHILD: "No one in the house but me, I know ..."

ALL: "No one in the house but Jeff, Jeff ... playing on the old banjo."

TEACHER: "Let' clap our knees!"

MERROW: "Do you like to sing?"

CHILD: "Uh ... yeah."

MERROW: "Could you have done better singing?"

CHILD: "Yeah."

MERROW: "What? When? Why?"

CHILD: "Because I was sick over the vacation."

MERROW: "Oh, you were? What happened?"

CHILD: "I threw up a lot!"

MERROW: "Your singing would have been better if you hadn't thrown up a lot?"

CHILD: "And I still got a very bad stuffy nose."

MERROW: "Well, I thought it was good singing, despite that."

CHILD: "I know."

MERROW: "But it would have been better, huh -- if you hadn't thrown up so much?"

CHILD: "Uh huh."

MERROW: That's music class in the background. This is the first grade -- and the regular teacher, Mrs. Peterson, has gone back to her classroom. This is her first break in the school day, so she's been with the kids now since shortly before 9:00 o'clock -- and it's now well after 10:00 -- about 10:40. She has 20 minutes off right now -- so I'm gonna leave the kids who are singing, and go see if I can talk to her.

Now, Mrs. Peterson -- the kids are in music class, so you have a free, I guess, 20 minutes. What do you do during the 20 minutes? Do you go sit and have a cup of coffee? You don't seem to be just sitting and having a cup of coffee!

PETERSON: No ... I'm not a coffee drinker, really. I drink it in the morning for breakfast, but that's all. Now, I usually go back to the room and work. Sometimes I check papers. Sometimes I get work ready for the next hour -- something that I want especially to do --such as now. I'm fixing Jeff's shells, and things that he brought back from Florida, and getting them all set so that when he starts to show them, there won't be any confusion. Now, if I didn't do this, he'd be grabbing out of the bag, and people ... and youngsters like Greg, for instance, would be out of their seat, and all over the place. So you have to think ahead -- one jump ahead of the children, and if you don't think one jump ahead of them, then they've got the jump on you! So this is what I do.

MERROW: But you're not sitting down. I would think you'd want to sit down.

PETERSON: No. I sit down during the reading groups. But with little children, you don't sit much ... with little children. You're never at your desk. You're usually wandering around, checking their work, or having the children for reading, or something. There's no sitting down time in first grade.

MERROW: Now, earlier when you were with the reading group, you were with 3 kids -- and the other -- in this class -- the other 18 were working on copying -- really, working on their handwriting, and following directions.

PETERSON: It was writing and it was experience reading, and there, they meet words that they wouldn't meet in their regular reading book.

CHILD: "Bob puts the new little boat in the water ..."

PETERSON: "Good ..."

CHILD: "Away ..."

PETERSON: "Away it went ..."

CHILD: "Away went the little toy boat. Putt, putt, putt, it said ..."

PETERSON: I'm having difficulty with these horseshoe crabs that have fallen apart here.

MERROW: Are you gonna do a little shell cleaning there, and throw cut some of the broken ones?

PETERSON: No ... I'm gonna put everything out that he brought -- and then, he can clean them out himself, because, otherwise, it would be kind of mean. Now, I'll put out everything out that he brought, and then he can describe the different things to the children, but we're gonna keep that for this afternoon, because in the morning, they work

the best. Now, they're pretty tired this morning, as you noticed, I guess -- but that's because they've been off schedule.

MERROW: Do the kids normally come charging up to show you new things like the new outfits and new pins?

PETERSON: Yeah. Everytime they have anything new, I have to see it. And I have to say how nice it is before the day starts.

MERROW: I noticed that once one had done it, all the others, it seemed -- who had something new -- kind of followed right up.

PETERSON: Right. Always ... I don't ask. One always starts, and then the others follow suit -- when they see that it draws attention. That's all they want ... a lot of attention.

MERROW: It must be kind of hard to give attention -- personal attention -- to 21 kids every day.

PETERSON: No. I'm used to them now, and I know just ... they understand me and I understand them. It's sort of like a big family now. Beginning of the year, it's a little difficult until they start to read. The minute they start to read, your discipline problems are gone.

MERROW: What about the kids who have problems reading? I, for example, noticed one child who seems like he might have a problem.

PETERSON: Which one?

MERROW: Well, I would guess this child in the near corner - right directly behind you. He's not here now, but that's his desk.

PETERSON: Jeremy?

MERROW: Well, I ... maybe you shouldn't use his name.

PETERSON: Well, he has more than ... he has a physical problem, also. And ... but he's a bright boy, but he's hyper -- and he's on medication.

MERROW: He's a hyper-active child?

PETERSON: Yeah. You noticed it right away.

MERROW: Well, I just noticed that he didn't fit in as well as the others. Now, what problems does that cause for you?

PETERSON: Well, I just take it a little easier with him; I understand he has a problem -- but he's a bright youngster, and when he outgrows this -- they say they outgrow it -- and when he outgrows this, he's gonna be all right. It's just a matter of time.

MERROW: He is on some kind of medication?

PETERSON: Yes, he is.

MERROW: What does he take -- do you know?

PETERSON: Riddelin.

MERROW: And that slows him down?

PETERSON: It's supposed to.

MERROW: Is that ... do you remember that happening -- now, you've

been teaching quite a few years -- do you remember that over the years, or is that a relatively new phenomenon?

PETERSON: No. I've had this some years.

PETERSON: "It's almost out, isn't it? Did you see that, Jackie?"

MERROW: "It's a loose tooth."

PETERSON: "See that?"

MERROW: "Should we tie a thread around it and pull it out?"

PETERSON: "What did your mother say to do about that?"

CHILD: "Tie a string around it, and push the door."

PETERSON: "Are you going to put a string around it?"

CHILD: "Maybe."

PETERSON: "Really?"

MERROW: "Be careful when you eat lunch, now."

PETERSON: "Yes, because if you bite into something quickly, you're like ... the tooth's likely to come out in it."

CHILD: "That's what I did at New York."

PETERSON: "You did that in New York? When? During the vacation?"

CHILD: "Uh huh."

PETERSON: "Oh, my goodness! You had your problems, didn't you?"

PETERSON: But you've got to expect that with little children.

MERROW: Now, we're on our way to lunch. Everybody's put their coats on, walking down the hall. We think it's hot dogs for lunch today.

MERROW: "What do you think's gonna be for lunch today?"

CHILD: "Hot dogs!"

MERROW: "You like the hot dogs?"

CHILD: "Uh huh."

MERROW: "Say it again ..."

CHILD: "Yes."

MERROW: "Me, too. Oh, now what do you ... oh, you stop here and wash your hands? Does everybody wash their hands now?"

CHILD: "Yes."

MERROW: "But there are only 3 sinks, and there are 21 children!"

CHILD: "I know that. We line up, and then we each get turns."

CHILD: "There's a hat in the sink!"

MERROW: "Oh, yeah. Hope it didn't get wet. Did you wash your hands?"

CHILD: "Yeah."

MERROW: "Did you dry them?"

MERROW: The rumor got started that we were gonna have hot dogs for lunch, but it turned out to be lasagna, string beans, pears and French bread and milk. That's a really good lunch.

COOK: Well, I'm glad you enjoyed it. We really try hard to put out a good lunch.

MERROW: Now, the ravioli didn't taste canned, the lasagna didn't taste canned ...

COOK: No ... it's ravioli in the can ...

MERROW: It's ravioli. The ravioli didn't taste canned, but it was from a can, right?

COOK: It was from a can, but I make my own meat sauce with my seasoning and then I add it on to the ravoli.

MERROW: Oh ...

COOK: And that's what gives it that nice home-made taste to it.

MERROW: The other things that surprised me is you just came around and asked if people wanted seconds. You don't do that every day.

COOK: I don't generally do that, no. It's just that I made a little more than I thought we would have for lunch. Instead of just freezing it, I just know they like seconds, so I give it to them.

MERROW: How long have you been cooking food for kids here at Hindley School?

COOK: I'm here 8 years.

MERROW: So ... I wasn't here when you were here, then. I was here a long time before that.

COOK: No. I'm here 8 years. I enjoy it. The kids are very ... they like to eat. The ones that do like to eat, and they ... I think we get along very well. They eat well, they like my cooking -- I hope they do, anyway.

MERROW: I just figured out. I was in first grade here 28 years ago.

COOK: Really?

MERROW: And I don't think we had hot lunches, then. I think we all brought our own lunch.

COOK: I don't really know. I don't think so. Who was the ... who was your teacher here?

MERROW: Mrs. Peterson.

COOK: Oh, for ... did you see her today?

MERROW: Yeah. I'm with her class right now.

COOK: Oh, is that where you're from? Oh, she's a grand person.

MERROW: Oh yeah ... oh yeah. She taught me, and all my brothers and sisters.

COOK: Oh, for goodness sakes!

MERROW: And now, my nieces and nephews go here ... this is kind of like old home week.

COOK: What are you doing now? Are you just coming into the schools or what? Are you ...

MERROW: Just kind of immersing myself in ... trying to pretend I'm a first-grader again, I guess -- I don't know.

COOK: Oh. isn't that wonderful! That's great.

MERROW: And I ... we're putting together a little radio program, as well, on what it's like to spend a day in a school.

COOK: Oh, great!

MERROW: And you're gonna be on it!

COOK: Oh, no! Don't tell me that! Sure I can't give you more ravioli?

MERROW: "What did you have for lunch?"

CHILD: "Uh ... turkey!"

MERROW: "What else?"

CHILD: "M & M, cookies, and candy!"

MERROW: "Anything to drink?"

CHILD: "Milk."

CHILD: "Raviolies ... beans, and rolls."

CHILD: "Um ... a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and some crackers and some milk, that's all."

CHILD: "Cream cheese and jelly sandwich."

MERROW: "What else?"

CHILD: "And some orio cookies, and some chocolate milk."

MERROW: "That's all right!"

CHILD: "Turkey."

MERROW: "Turkey sandwich?"

CHILD: "Yes."

MERROW: "What else?"

CHILD: "A pretzel ... and milk."

CHILD: "I had a salami sandwich, and I had ... and a half of an orange, and some green peppers."

GITE: It's lunch time, and the students are moving swiftly to the cafeteria. Everybody wants to be first in line for a meal. For me, the lunch period meant that half of the day was over -- but it didn't mean that for Mrs. Castle.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

CASTLE: My lunch hour is a variable. It depends, as to what the attitude of the day is. If I'm pressing a deadline, such as now, it's a hassle. I run down and grab a snack, and quickly digest it, and run back.

GITE: After lunch, Mrs. Castle's day seems to take a different direction. She's taken from the usual classroom setting, and given additional duties as Yearbook Coordinator.

CASTLE: We are producing a yearbook, and we have the challenge of overcoming, let's say, a yearbook that has not been too favorably accepted by the student body. We tried to do some things to give the yearbook a positive image. We named the yearbook -- heretofore, it's not had a name -- we named it "Algole" -- that's a Greek word that's technically pronounced "Ogle" -- we Anglo-Saxonized it to make it "Algole" , because that's our school color. And the reason why we chose the name is because it means "star" -- it means a star that's so bright, until it gives the impression that it's two stars.

And I like my yearbook class because it's a break. After having taught three literature classes, I like the non-structured approach that it lends itself to.

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

MERROW: Now, I was in your class in 1952 or '53 -- how did you teach me to read? Was that the time of phonics or look-say?

PETERSON: Both ... both ... both. But at that time, we didn't have the same materials to work with, but we did the same thing -- but I did it by myself.

MERROW: Well, then, was it later on that the look-say came into favor? Did you abandon phonics for a while?

PETERSON: I never did. I closed the door and taught it!

MERROW: Now you've been teaching for a long time now. Tell ... what do you think makes a good teacher? First of all, let me say to you, I know you're a good teacher because I had you in first grade, and all my brothers and sisters had you, also. So ... you tell me what you think makes a good teacher.

PETERSON: I think you have to love the work. I think that's ... and like children, of course. But you have to enjoy the work, or else you couldn't come to school every day -- and I think you can tell right away whether or not a person is going to be a good teacher by their attitude toward the children when they first come in, and their attitude toward how much work they do, and how dedicated they are. But I can't tell you anything more than that.

I do think that ... they used to say years ago, "A good teacher is born -- not made", you know, sort of thing. And I think, to a certain extent, there is some truth in it.

GITE: At the fifth period, Mrs. Castle takes on her administrative duties as chairperson of the English Department.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

CASTLE: This is my first year as chairperson, and it's been an unusual, taxing role, because we're undergoing the Southern Association Evaluation -- so it's not typical. We are critiquing now, the disciplines that the other departments have written, we are also in the process of confirming ours -- so at this point, it's a very taxing one. At the beginning of the school year, it was a frightening one; now, it's an awesome one.

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

CHILD: "'I have a good garden,' said Mrs. Bear. 'I have a flower garden. I shall have flowers of all colors.' 'Flowers! Flowers!', said Mr. Squirrel. 'What a funny garden!' 'Flowers!', said Mr. Fox. 'You cannot eat flowers!' Mrs. Bear laughed and laughed. Then she went on with her work. The others went back to work, too. 'Flowers!', said Mrs. Rabbit. 'Nothing but flowers? Just flowers? What will Mrs. Bear eat?'"

PETERSON: "So why was she worried? Why were they worried about Mrs. Bear?"

CHILD: "Because she wouldn't have anything to eat -- because you can't eat flowers."

PETERSON: "Right. Kathy, what did the bees do?"

CHILD: "The bees from Mrs. Bear's flower garden. 'Flowers!' they buzzed. Soon, all the bees found out about the flowers. How happy they were! How they buzzed around Mrs. Bee's garden!"

PETERSON: "Whose garden, sweetie?"

CHILD: "Around Mrs. Bear's garden."

PETERSON: "That's better, dear."

CHILD: "'Let's make honey!', they buzzed. 'Good honey! Good honey!' How the bees buzzed! How the bees buzzed!"

PETERSON: "Very nice. And then what did Mrs. Rabbit, Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Fox do that day?"

CHILD: "Mrs. Rabbit, Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Fox had a picnic by the brook. Mrs. Rabbit ate her cabbage. It was good cabbage. Mr. Fox ate his wheat cake. It was a good wheat cake. Mr. Squirrel had seven ears of corn. He was going to pop it over a fire. 'I see Mrs. Bear!', said Mr. Fox. 'Come to the picnic', he called. 'There is nothing to eat in your garden.'"

PETERSON: "Then what did Mrs. Bear do about that?"

CHILD: "How Mrs. Bear laughed! 'Look at the honey', she said. 'It came from my flower garden. Bees made honey from flowers. Did you ...'"

PETERSON: "Take that line again, will you please, sweetie? You said 'made', and the word is not 'made' -- I think you may be ..."

CHILD: "Bees make ..."

PETERSON: "No. Look at it again, dear."

CHILD: "Bees make ... make honey from flowers. Did you know that? 'Now I have honey to eat!' 'Honey?', they all said -- 'You have honey to eat, Mrs. Bear? That was a good garden you had after all!'"

PETERSON: "Very nice. Now, next time, we're not going to take any more stories today because it's a short day. We're going to do the picnic basket next time. And I'm going to ask you to look through the story, find any new words that you can. Now, in the back of your book, you'll find ..."

CHILD: "8 ... 138..."

PETERSON: "138. Yeah ... that's right. 138 in the back of your book -- if you'll look in the back, you will see -- they're going to have 'window', 'better', 'than', and other. Four new words. Would you look in the back of your book, please? Where the vocabulary is, honey. Find 137, 138, 139. Did you find it?"

CHILD: "Uh huh ..."

PETERSON: "Everybody got it? Kathy, have you got it, dear? It's in the back of your book, sweetie."

CHILD: "No ... I can't find it."

PETERSON: "Way over in the back. Show her, would you, Jay? You're close to her, dear. Show her the place, honey. Just put your finger over, sweetie. Just put your finger over -- where her hand is, dear. That's it. Let's say them together. Everybody. Let's put 137 ... the word is ..."

CHILD: "Net ..."

PETERSON: "No."

CHILD: "Oh! Window ... window."

PETERSON: "Let's do it together."

ALL: "Window ... better ... than ... other. How many words for tomorrow?"

CHILD: "Four."

PETERSON: "Four new words. Bye-bye!"

CHILD: "Bye-bye!"

MERROW: What makes a kid memorable? Now how many years have you been teaching?

PETERSON: This is my 36th year.

MERROW: Okay. This is your 36th year of teaching. What makes a kid memorable? You know, in the 36 years, can you pick out 10 or so kids that really, you liked the best, or ...

PETERSON: I've never tried ... I've never tried to do that. But ... now, for instance, Stephanie, who's in the room here -- I remember her

mother. Her mother was in my first grade.

MERROW: Uh huh.

PETERSON: And I remember her very clearly. She was Nancy Short.

MERROW: Uh huh.

PETERSON: ... when she was in my room, and she still lives in her mother's house. And, of course, I've seen her over the years now and then, because I've passed by the house -- and I've known the family for years, and I had all the family the way I did with your family. And when Stephanie came into kindergarten, Nancy came in and told me who she was, and that she had a youngster in kindergarten, and she said, "I hope Stephanie gets in your room next year", which luckily, she did. And when Nancy comes in to pick her up at the door, I can see Nancy in Stephanie!

MERROW: Do you remember Nancy -- the mother -- because of seeing her over the years, or do you actually remember her from when she was in your first grade?

PETERSON: I think I remember her from when she was in my first grade. She was a very lovable child.

MERROW: Is that what it takes to be memorable for you -- to be a lovable child?

PETERSON: Perhaps, to a certain degree, yes.

MERROW: What's that mean -- "be a lovable child"?

PETERSON: A child who seems to like everything, and the world is her oyster!

MERROW. Okay now. So that you do remember some kids?

PETERSON: I think so. I don't always remember what they looked like, John. I don't always remember what they look like. But I remember your family, because I'd had several of you, and a family where I've had 3 or 4 children, I remember especially, I think -- more than I do single children. Steven's father, I had in first grade, also.

MERROW: Oh? His name is Joe.

PETERSON: You remember Joe?

MERROW: Sure ... yeah.

PETERSON: Sure ... yeah.

MERROW: I ... do you remember? I have to ask this. Do you remember me?

PETERSON: Yes, I do.

MERROW: I feel kind of silly ... but what was I like?

PETERSON: You were a good kid! You were artistic. Are you still doing any artwork?

MERROW: I'm a klutz!

PETERSON: You were very artistic in first grade. You were good!

MERROW: Now ... do you remember Temple Dance? John Franklin?

PETERSON: Oh, yes! Do you remember -- we used to go down to the farm?

MERROW: Yeah ... sure.

PETERSON: Down to the Ziegler farm?

MERROW: Uh huh.

PETERSON: With Temple's mother -- used to take us down and get us into it.

MERROW: And now, let's see -- Bill Hubbard, John Franklin?

PETERSON: Now, Bill Hubbard is hazier. The name means something. His mother, I think, was in real estate or something, or she married again, or something. I remember there was something there. But I wouldn't know him if I met him. Of course, I wouldn't know you, either, if I met you on the street -- if you didn't tell me who you were.

MERROW: Virginia Phelps?

PETERSON: Oh yes! I remember Virginia Phelps very, very ... yes, very clearly.

MERROW: She was my first crush. I really ... but it wasn't first grade.

PETERSON: Was she really? Didn't we go down to her house, too? We used to make little walks, remember?

MERROW: Uh huh.

PETERSON: We went down to her house, and visited -- and sang!

MERROW: Uh huh.

PETERSON: Her mother was very active in the parents' group, if I remember, and Virginia -- when they came to town, Virginia -- her mother wanted her to be put in first grade, I remember, at the time, 'cause she'd come up from Bronxville, or someplace, if I remember correctly -- and she just wasn't quite ready, and I suggested that she go down to the kindergarten, and come up the next year -- which she did -- because she was lost, you know? And her mother did it, and she was one of my good first graders!

MERROW: How many of your former students do you -- are you still in touch with in some way?

PETERSON: Not too many. I'll tell you ... this is the type of town where they move away, and you don't ... now I have graduate students that write me, that I've had as student-teachers ... they write me. But very few of my first graders are in town ... very few. I guess you could count them on the fingers of one hand.

MRS. IRENE CASTLE

GITE: The hands on that clock seem to be moving so slow. After all, it's been 6 years since I was in a high school classroom -- but for my teacher for the day, things still continue.

CASTLE: Sixth period is, again, atypical. I allow this time to talk

with parents, I set up conferences with my students, I set up conferences with my parents, I try and get into the community, if it is a parent that is without a phone.

GITE: That's it! The thing we've all been waiting for. The bell that says it's time to go home. I can easily walk out, but will my teacher do the same? How does Mrs. Castle feel when the bell goes off? Does she, too, feel relief that another day has ended?

CASTLE: Several weeks ago, my husband said to me that I may be making an "A" in my schoolwork, but I was definitely flunking my homework, domestically. He feels that I'm giving too much time. I like what I'm doing, so I'm not a clock-watcher. Oftentimes, I'm not cognizant of the fact that the day has ended ... because the beginning of fifth period, I'm independently structured, so I don't ... I always know what time it is. Last week -- last Thursday, I believe it was -- my Assistant Principal ordered me to go home; I think it was about 5:15. He said the building was going to be secured. But I haven't always felt this way ... about staying at school. There was a time when I watched the clock, and I left -- but it was early in the profession. Having been in the profession 12 years, I've grown to respect and appreciate it, and I've learned that you cannot fit a profession into a time frame.

GITE: And now you know what it's like -- a day in the life of a teacher! Whew!

MRS. KATHRYN PETERSON

MERROW: School is out. All the kids are moving out now -- everybody kind of rushing toward the door. And I guess it's one of 186 days at Hindley School. You don't think it's a lot of work, you ought to try it. A lot of kids are starting to follow me now, because they see me holding a microphone -- they're trying to figure out what I'm doing.

CHILD: "Where you going?"

MERROW: "I'm going home. I'm going home. I had a long day at school!"

BLAIR: Reporter Lloyd Gite, Station KERA, Dallas, spent the day with Mrs. Irene Castle at L.G. Pinkston High School.

MERROW: Mrs. Castle told Lloyd Gite that she likes teaching, and will be back next year. For Mrs. Peterson, this is her last year of teaching. Connecticut has a mandatory retirement age of 70.

BLAIR: Throughout her teaching career, Mrs. Peterson put aside 6% of her salary into the State Retirement Fund. That money -- plus the state's contribution -- will provide her with an income during retirement, of between 12,000 and 13,000 a year. John talked with Mrs. Peterson about retirement, and about her fears.

MERROW: Well, now -- after all these years, what will you do -- you've been teaching for 36 years. What will you do next year -- without a first grade to come to in the morning?

PETERSON: I'm not sure! That kind of frightens me!

MERROW: Does it?

PETERSON: Yeah.

MERROW: I would think it would be a big hole to fill. I know you play

golf, because you told me.

PETERSON: Yes, but not around here. I don't ... I couldn't afford to belong to any of the clubs here. And you have to really belong to a club here in order to play. And when I'm up in Maine in the summertime, you don't have to belong to a club. You can just go from one course to another, you know -- by the day -- and we just go from one town to another and play at different clubs.

MERROW: Will you stay in Darien?

PETERSON: As far as I know ... yes. As far as I know. My daughter's in town. My son's way up in Durham, so ... but -- he wanted to land, and his wife was quite a horsewoman, so they have horses, and they're way up in the upper part of the state, so that I can reach his place within 3 hours.

MERROW: Uh huh. Oh.

PETERSON. It's not that far away, you know.

MERROW: But that first morning when you wake up, school's started, and you're not teaching. That could be a tough morning.

PETERSON: I think I'll stay in Maine for that one!

MERROW: You know, after all these years -- it's 28 years ago ...

PETERSON: It's frightening ... it's really frightening to feel that way, because I've done it for so many years.

MERROW: It's been 28 years since I was in your class, Mrs. Peterson, and I don't have any idea what your first name is, and I'm not sure I'd be willing to call you by your first name, even if I knew -- but what is your first name?

PETERSON: Kathryn.

MERROW: Kathryn.

PETERSON: It's just an old-fashioned name.

MERROW: Is that what people call you?

PETERSON: No, they call me "Pete!"

MERROW: Oh?

PETERSON: Didn't you have my husband in high school? Math depar:ment?

MERROW: No ... no, I didn't ... no.

PETERSON: You didn't?

MERROW: No. So they call ... Kathryn is your name, and they call you Pete? Well, I don't think I could ever manage that. I think I'll call you Mrs. Peterson.

PETERSON: Well, they used to call him "Pete" up in the high school, and then when I went back teaching -- of course, I was out of teaching for about 15 years. You see, when I had my family, I didn't ... my girl was in the sixth grade and my boy was in the fifth grade before I went back teaching -- and that was because of the war. And they called me and asked me to come in and help them out. And that's how I happened

to go back teaching -- was during the war, and otherwise, I probably never would have done it.

MERROW: Well, I don't think I could ever imagine calling you either "Pete" or "Kathryn", so I think I'll keep calling you Mrs. Peterson.

PETERSON: You may call me "Pete" if you'd like to!

MERROW: Thanks. Thanks very much. That's my first grade teacher, Mrs. Peterson!

MERROW: This week, as part of our teacher's series, our book reviewer, Dr. Donald N. Bigelow is back -- and this week, he has a book of poetry. It's by Albert Cullum, and since the title of the book is probably the first poem, I think I'll ask you the title.

DONALD N. BIGELOW

BIGELOW: Well, it's almost the next to the last poem, strangely enough -- but I would like to give it to you, and it gives the title.

"The robin sang, and sang and sang --
but teacher -- you went right on.
The last bell sounded the end of the day,
but teacher -- you went right on.
The geranium on the window sill just died,
but teacher -- you went right on ..."

MERROW: And the last line is the title -- "The Geranium on the Window Just Died, But Teacher, You Went Right On!"

BIGELOW: And the last line is the title - this very sad, but hopeful book!

MERROW: Sad, but hopeful.

BIGELOW: It's sad, because it is -- even though written by an adult -- it is a sense of what the truth children see, and it's sad because this adult, I think, sees what children see in the classroom, and it's sad because teachers are so sad, and they go right on being so sad -- but I don't want to sound like Jonathan Kozel!

MERROW: Read some more of the poem.

BIGELOW: Yes. For instance:

"Good morning, class. Today I will prepare you
for the future.
Listen carefully -- and don't interrupt!
Are there any questions?
None? Good!"

MERROW: Oh, that's devastating.

BIGELOW: Yes ...

MERROW: Please go on ...

BIGELOW: Yes ... the sense of silence, the sense of requiring obedience, but here is the one that's perhaps the saddest of all:

"I want you to come to my house, and yet, I don't!
You're so important, but our screen door has a hole in it!
And my mother has no fancy cake to serve.

I want you to come to my house, teacher, and yet,
I don't ...
My brother chews with his mouth wide open, and
sometimes, my Dad burps!
I wish I could trust you enough, teacher, to
invite you to my house!"

MERROW: That's ... you know, that captures perfectly the way kids -- or at least the way I remember feeling about teachers, you know ... you're in awe of them ... afraid of them.

BIGELOW: And not only that, it captured the whole problem that if teachers were trained to do anything -- and it's doubtful -- one thing they're not trained to do is to have anything to do with the kid outside the classroom. But the point there is the trust that he does ... Here's another one; the same kind of thing. Here is that lovely sense of the child who really wonders what there is in the change of tone, and knows. Listen to this:

"You talk funny when you talk to the principal,
Or when the teacher next door borrows some paper ...
And when my mother comes to see you, you talk funny!
Why don't you talk to them like you talk to us?"

BIGELOW: You can take that both ways. It works either way. The point is the teacher is uncomfortable with one or the other -- presumably here, there's a rapport in class -- and they recognize when there is no rapport outside of class. There's 2 or 3 more that I would do ...

"I was good at everything -- honest -- everything,
until I started being here with you.
I was good at laughing, playing dead, being King.
Yeah ... I was good at everything.
But now I'm only good at everything on
Saturdays and Sundays!"

MERROW: That's ...

BIGELOW: Yes.

MERROW: You know, I'm not trying to steal your job -- you're the book reviewer.

BIGELOW: Not at all!

MERROW: But I have ... someone gave that book to our son, our 8 year old son, and he adored it. He was stunned by it!

BIGELOW: He didn't know other people thought that way!

MERROW: Exactly right ... exactly right.

BIGELOW: Yes ... of course.

MERROW: And, every adult I've shown it to just has had that same sense of "Holy Cow! That's what I used to feel!"

BIGELOW: You know, I know it's unfair to every one of the 2 million teachers -- and it's probably just as fair, though -- to every one of the 20 or 30 million families, because we're all, in a sense, 2 or 3 people, and we're always being overheard. But teachers -- like mothers and daddies, I suppose, should know better.

"Good boys and good girls always listen --
To learn, we must listen.

We must listen all the time!
Good boys and girls never talk -- but they always listen.
We should listen, and listen, and listen!"

That's the quotation.

"To you, teacher, and your words, your words,
your words -- your words, your words, your words,
your words!"

It reminds me of a poem, John, that a student once wrote about me. The last two lines went:

"A flow of words, a gush of speech --
with hardly anything to teach!"

MERROW: That's our book reviewer, Donald N. Bigelow, talking about "Teacher, the Geranium on the Window Just Died, But You Went Right On!" It's by Albert Cullum. It's magnificently illustrated.

BIGELOW: Oh, beautiful ... a different illustator for every illustration.

MERROW: And we ... the book reviewer and the interviewer are recommending it.

BIGELOW: That's right!

BLAIR: And speaking of teachers, Philip Lopate, a teacher at P.S. 90 in New York City, has written a book called "Being With Children". He talked with Joan Friedenburg about what it takes to be a good teacher.

PHILIP LOPATE

LOPATE: I think the first thing that it takes is observation. You have to look at the kids for a while before you can act on them, and I think sometimes, teachers don't give themselves that time to observe properly which way the kids are moving -- because it's important to grab hold of a kid by the part of him that's in motion, let's say.

So ... some kids like to do very active things. Some kids are very introverted. I like to watch kids for a long time, and not just in the classroom, but on the schoolyard, and when they're getting out of school, and in the lunchroom, and watch them when they're more or less being natural -- not under the eyes of a supervising adult.

FRIEDENBURG: What would you consider problems?

LOPATE: Well, one of the problems is that often, when you're a teacher, you suddenly just don't want to be there. You want to get out of the classroom. You don't want to be with a lot of little people. You want to talk to a friend at lunch, or something like that -- and I think that's understandable. I think a lot of the resistance that teachers feel is very understandable, and yet, they're made to feel guilty about it, or they make themselves feel guilty about it.

FRIEDENBURG: How is that?

LOPATE: They don't really ... there's very little in the system which corroborates this feeling, so it's like being a bad mother, you know, they feel -- "Oh, I don't understand why I don't like all the kids equally." Well, it's natural that you'll like some kids more than other kids!

FRIEDENBURG: Well, what happens when you don't like a kid?

LOPATE: Well, when you don't like a kid, the first thing to do is, really, to understand it.

FRIEDENBURG: How do you understand it?

LOPATE: I don't mean understand it in the sense of overcoming it; I mean, first, simply recognize the fact there's something about that kid that's obnoxious -- there's something that bothers me. As soon as you come to that realization, then you're able to take a step back and say, "Well -- just as with an adult in life, is it because this kid has something inside himself which is like something that I don't like inside myself?" Or is it that he is manipulative or abusive or whatever? As soon as you begin to observe your own reactions, then you're able to analyze them, and you're able, possibly, to correct that kid's behavior.

What's also important is to be honest enough to know what your instincts are, so that ... sometimes teachers do a lot for the kids, and not enough for themselves -- like they're good, idealistic, selfless people, and meanwhile, they're getting a headache, and they're not getting any pleasure out of what they're doing. You shouldn't make yourself into a robot that doesn't have any feelings, you know -- the kids will respect you more if you express what's going on inside you. And that's one thing I learned from children -- they have a very quick reaction time, and when I'm around them, I try to have a quick reaction time, too. So I don't try to turn myself into a saint that's going to turn the other cheek all the time, you know -- I try to tell them if they're violating my rights, or they're being nasty, I just tell them right away.

BLAIR: Teacher Philip Lopate, author of "Being With Children", talking with Joan Friedenburg.

MERROW: Next week, we finish this three-part series on teachers and teaching with some hints about how to fire a bad teacher.

BLAIR: And some insights into how good teachers are trained.

PHILIP LOPATE

LOPATE: One of the things that I realized through the progress of my own career as a teacher -- was that the kind of experiences that are necessary to make a good teacher are often not taught in the regular teacher-training programs, and also, that many good teachers don't necessarily have to have a teaching certificate.

MERROW: Join us next week for more about teaching teachers to teach. If you'd like transcripts of this three-part series on teaching, send 75¢ to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Please ask for Programs Number 62, 63 and 64 -- and please, tell us the call letters of your NPR station. Here's the address, again. National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Assistant Producer is David Selvin, with production assistance by Joan Friedenburg. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: This is NPR ... National Public Radio.